

*Emmanuel Congregational Christian Church in Canada*  
*Constitution and By-Laws*  
*5 February 2023 (Revised)*

**CONSTITUTION**

**Preamble**

In gratitude to Almighty God for the gift of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ; and believing that we have been called into being as a Christian congregation to bring honour and praise to Him, to offer the experience of His salvation to the world, to help and strengthen each other in the Christian faith, and to open ourselves to the leading and gifting of the Holy Spirit;

We, therefore, declare the following to be our principles and unite ourselves in a common body as hereinafter named.

**ARTICLE 1: Name**

The Congregation shall be called Emmanuel Congregational Christian Church in Canada.

**ARTICLE 11: Purpose**

1. To provide opportunities for people to join together to worship God--Father, Son and Holy Spirit--as is revealed through the Holy Scriptures, the Sacraments of Holy Communion and Baptism, and in the ongoing relationship He initiates and sustains with persons willing to accept His love.
2. To provide opportunities for people to be nurtured in the Christian faith by such means as proclamation, prayer, worship, teaching, discipling, and the Sacraments of Holy Communion and Baptism.
3. To provide opportunities for people to make a personal commitment to Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord and to experience the new birth.
4. To provide opportunities for people who have made a personal commitment to Jesus Christ to grow in His likeness through the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
5. To provide opportunities for sharing God's love with those outside the Church, by such means as evangelism, prayer, and personal and financial support of those who are in need.
6. To arrange, direct or transact such business as may be thought proper and necessary in connection with and for the interests and honour of Christ through Emmanuel Congregational Christian Church in Canada.

**ARTICLE 111: Statement of Faith**

1. We believe that the Bible, consisting of the Old and New Testaments, is the divinely inspired and infallible word of God and the final authority in all matters of faith and practice.

2. We believe in God the Father, Maker and Sustainer of heaven and earth. We believe that He created man and woman in His image.
3. We believe there is one God, revealed in three persons, co-existent, co-equal and co-eternal, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
4. We believe in the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, His conception by the Holy Spirit, His birth of the Virgin Mary, His real but sinless humanity, His voluntary humiliation in life as a Man of Sorrows culminating in His death on the Cross for our Sin, His bodily resurrection from the dead, His ascension into heaven as the only and eternal mediator between us and God, and His coming again in power and glory.
5. We believe in God the Holy Spirit, who proceeds from God the Father and God the Son, to convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment. We believe that the Holy Spirit comes to dwell within every believer in Christ as an abiding helper, teacher and guide. He is the source of power from on high that is available to each committed believer in order to bear witness to Jesus Christ and minister in His name.
6. We believe that every human being who has not yet accepted God's love in Jesus Christ is separated from God and, apart from God, is sinful and lost. Our recognition of this condition, our repentance, and our regeneration by the Holy Spirit is essential for our salvation. Redemption is wholly by the blood of Christ, and salvation is by grace, through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.
7. We believe each person committed to Jesus Christ possesses eternal life now, and through the power of the Holy Spirit is enabled to live a Godly life.
8. We believe our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ will return to claim His Church. His coming again is the fulfillment of the blessed hope set before the believer. Those who entrust themselves to Him will bodily rise to everlasting joy. Those who reject His love will be raised for final judgment.
9. We believe in the Church universal. The Church of Christ is not an organization but a living body composed of all believers in Jesus Christ. A local church is an expression in any locality of the Church universal. It is composed of believers gathered as a corporate testimony to the Lordship of Christ and their oneness under Him as the Body of Christ.

#### **ARTICLE IV: Statement of Policy**

1. We believe that Jesus Christ is the Head of His body, the Church universal, and of each local church.
2. We believe that Jesus Christ exercises His authority in the Emmanuel Congregational Christian Church in Canada by the Holy Spirit and through the Holy Scriptures.
3. We believe in the congregational form of church government, in which each local church, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and according to the Holy Scriptures, is responsible to determine the will of God for the life of that church. Each local church is answerable only to Jesus Christ, and not to any association, conference, counsel, synod, or any other ecclesiastical body.
4. We believe that it is proper and beneficial for each local church to seek fellowship and counsel of other local churches.

## **ARTICLE V: The Members**

*(last updated June, 2012)*

### ***1. Introduction***

The congregation of Emmanuel Congregational Christian Church in Canada believes that all who confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour and strive to live in obedience to Him make up the Body of Christ.

We have established congregational polity to govern our local church body, because we believe that under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and according to the Holy Scriptures we are responsible to determine the will of God for the life of our church. Therefore, we believe that everyone who has a voice in the decisions of the church should give evidence both of increasing growth in sensitivity to the guidance of the Holy Spirit and of continuing growth in knowledge of God through the Holy Scriptures. In addition, anyone who shares responsibility for our common church life should make a firm commitment to full participation in that common life.

We recognize that people differ in the degree of commitment they are able to give to a local church body.

### ***2. Membership***

Every Member is a minister of the Lord Jesus Christ called to offer his or her life in love to the service of others. Thus, each is to be an example and encouragement to others, as a member of the same family.

The responsibilities of Membership cannot be fulfilled through our own strength, but only as we rely upon the enabling grace of God, with the aid of other Christians. Members will therefore assist and support one another in seeking God's grace by means of the spiritual disciplines practiced by Christians throughout the history of the Church.

We believe that God's Grace allows us to live a disciplined Christian life, and Members are encouraged to:

- a) Seek continually to enjoy God's presence and give praise to him;
- b) Commune with God daily through prayer and Bible reading;
- c) Make every effort to become established in small groups and/or mutual support groups;
- d) Participate weekly in Sunday worship;
- e) Endeavor to attend all business meetings of the church;
- f) Partake regularly of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, Holy Communion;
- g) Participate with other members of Christ's body in courses of Bible study;
- h) Use the spiritual gifts given to them by God, and perceived in them by the other members, for spreading the Gospel and nurturing the Body of Christ;
- i) Contribute regularly to the work of the church in a significant portion of both the time and the money which they hold in trust from God;

- j) Submit first to God, and under Him, to the leadership, guidance, and discipline of the Pastor(s) and Elders, taking care to avoid divisiveness and unprofitable controversy;
- k) Actively support the Pastor(s), Elders, and all others in leadership positions through prayer, encouragement, and acts of service.

Membership is open to all who publicly confess Jesus Christ as their Saviour and Lord, have been baptized, show evidence of growing in Christ-likeness, have assented to the historic Covenant of Faith (Article III), have indicated a desire to join with Emmanuel Congregational Christian Church, and who, with God's help, are willing to undertake the responsibilities outlined above.

Membership at Emmanuel Congregational Christian Church may be attained through the following processes:

- 1) Confirmation – This assumes the person was baptized as an infant and at this point of his or her life publically professes his or her faith in Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord
- 2) Believer's Baptism
- 3) The transfer of membership from another Christian church. This transfer should be in the form of a letter from the other church addressed to Emmanuel's elders' board indicating that the said person was an active member in good standing before transferring.

Completion of a membership course will be required by all persons seeking membership, and a Pastor or Elder will discuss membership with each candidate. All those seeking membership must be approved by the Board of Elders.

Membership is a solemn commitment. We expect that those who are contemplating it will enter into a season of prayer, with the support of others in the church, to determine if God wills for them to make that commitment.

The Board of Elders shall remove from active membership any person who has willfully absented herself or himself from the common life of the congregation for a period of one year without adequate cause. Persons removed from active membership will be placed on an 'inactive' membership roll. If possible, the Elders and/or Pastor(s) will notify the person of this change and encourage the person to either return to the common life of Emmanuel Church or seek fellowship in a different church. The board of elders shall examine the roll of membership annually. Reinstatement to the active membership roll shall be at the request of the individual and with the agreement of the Board of Elders. Persons on the inactive roll shall not have voting privileges.

The Board of Elders may remove from membership any person whose conduct is blatantly ungodly and unrepentant. The process to be followed is outlined in Matthew 18:15-17. Restoration of the individual will always be the goal.

## **ARTICLE VI: The Pastors**

The responsibilities of the Pastor include leading worship, preaching, teaching, visiting, counseling, prayer, studying, encouraging, disciplining, administering, extending hospitality, representing the local body, celebrating Holy communion and Baptism, marrying, and burying.

Throughout His dealings with His people, God has called specific individuals to lead His community. Following this pattern, we expect that one or more Pastors will be called by God and the people of Emmanuel Congregational Christian Church in Canada.

We also believe that God has distributed ministry gifts throughout the local body, and that it is the responsibility of each Christian to call upon the Holy Spirit for help in discovering, developing, and exercising those gifts. As we grow in Christ-likeness, each of us becomes a minister to others.

The Pastor is charged by God to shepherd His local flock. Our Pastors will exercise the traditional forms of ministry, but they will not have sole responsibility for all of them, nor will they alone attempt to meet the needs of every individual member of Emmanuel Congregational Christian Church in Canada. Instead, they will spend much of their time ministering to the needs of their Elders, Deacons, and other leaders, who, in turn, will minister to the rest of the body.

Pastor(s) shall be Members of the church and voting members of the Board of Elders.

If more than one Pastor serves at the same time, areas of authority and responsibility shall be determined by agreement between the Pastors and the Elders board. One of the Pastors shall be designated the Senior Pastor.

The Senior Pastor, while accountable to the Board of Elders, is the head of the church staff (pastoral and non-pastoral), and all staff members shall be accountable to the Senior Pastor.

## **ARTICLE VII: The Elders**

1. The Board of Elders shall oversee all matters pertaining to the functioning of the church, with specific responsibility for the spiritual life of the church.
2. Consideration of a person for Eldership shall be based upon Membership in the church, the qualifications of elders recorded in the Scriptures, evidence of such qualifications in the person's life, and the ways in which the individual may complement the work of the Board of Elders.
3. The number of Elders shall be determined by the Board of Elders according to the needs of the congregation.
4. A. When new Elders are required, the Board of Elders shall inform the congregation of the number of new Elders needed.

- B. Members will be encouraged to prayerfully consider suitable candidates and will be invited to submit nominations to the Board of Elders during the subsequent two weeks.
  - C. The Board of Elders will prayerfully consider all nominations. Two or more Elders may meet with nominees to discuss the responsibilities of eldership.
  - D. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit received through prayer and by discernment, the Elders shall present to a congregational meeting each person the Holy Spirit has led them to recommend for Eldership.
  - E. The recommendation(s) of the Board of Elders must be confirmed by at least seventy-five percent (75%) of active members present and voting, at a meeting attended by at least forty percent (40%) of the active membership plus one. The names of those recommended will be made available at least 14 days prior to the meeting at which the vote of confirmation will take place.
5. The Board of Elders shall be composed of the pastoral staff and the chosen Elders.
  6. A chosen Elder shall serve for a maximum of five (5) years with a one (1) year extension if approved by the congregation. A previous Elder may be nominated again, after having been off the Elders Board for at least one year.
  7. The terms of the Elders shall be staggered, so that there will be continuity in the work of the Board of Elders.
  8. The Chairperson of the Board of Elders shall be elected annually from the Board members.

### **ARTICLE VIII: The Deacons**

1. The Deacons shall be responsible for the physical operation of the church. Deacons' tasks shall be set by the Board of Elders and may be changed by them as the physical needs of the congregation change.
2. Consideration of the person for Deaconship shall be based upon Membership in the church, the qualifications of deacons recorded in the Scriptures, evidence of such qualifications in the person's life, and the ways in which the individual may complement the work of the Board of Deacons.
3. The number of Deacons shall be determined by the Board of Elders according to the needs of the congregation.
4. A. When new Deacons are required, the Board of Elders shall inform the congregation of the number of new Deacons needed.  
 B. Members will be encouraged to prayerfully consider suitable candidates and will be invited to submit nominations for Deacons to the Board of Elders during the subsequent two weeks.  
 The Board of Elders shall be responsible for interviewing eligible candidates and then, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit received through prayer and by discernment, the elders shall choose which person(s) shall become Deacons.
5. A Deacon shall serve for a maximum of five (5) years with a one (1) year extension if approved by the congregation. A previous Deacon may be nominated again after having been off the Deacons Board for at least one year.
6. The terms of the Deacons shall be staggered so that there will be continuity in the work of the Board of Deacons.

7. The Board of Deacons shall nominate, from within its membership, a Chairperson.
8. Each Deacon shall be responsible to the elders, and a regular report shall be made to the Board of Elders when requested by the Elders.

#### **ARTICLE IX: Amendments**

1. This constitution may be amended upon the approval of an amendment by the Board of Elders, with confirmation by 75% of active members present and voting, at a meeting attended by at least forty percent (40%) of the active membership plus one. Proposed amendments shall be provided in writing to each active member thirty (30) days prior to the congregational meeting at which confirmation of an amendment will be requested. Thus, the members will have the opportunity to express to the Elders their concerns regarding the proposed amendment.
2. Article III, the Statement of Faith, while not a direct translation of scripture, may only be amended to reflect linguistic changes. The principle elements of faith encompassed by the statement may not be amended.

## **BY-LAWS**

### **1. Meetings of the Board of Elders**

The Board of Elders shall meet a minimum of ten (10) times per year. Normally, all decisions by the Board shall be made by prayer and the general agreement of the Elders without formal voting. However, should either the Pastor or twenty-five percent (25%) of the entire Board believe that general agreement cannot be reached; they may invoke the Impasse Resolution Procedure defined below.

- a. The congregation shall be informed at two successive services that the Impasse Resolution Procedure has been invoked.
- b. The matter at issue shall be presented to the congregation at these times.
- c. The congregation shall be encouraged to pray for and communicate with the Elders, concerning the matter which has led to the impasse.
- d. The Elders shall meet again, within one week following the second notice, to seek general agreement.
- e. If general agreement still is not forthcoming, the Board of Elders may decide the matter by a two-thirds (2/3) vote.
- f. The congregation shall be informed of the outcome at the next Sunday service. In particular, if the Elders have failed to reach general agreement and the matter has been put to a vote, that fact must be reported to the congregation.

The invocation of the Impasse Resolution Procedure is a grave decision, not to be entered into lightly.

### **2. Discipline**

Disciplining of a Pastor, Elder, or Deacon shall be carried out by the Board of Elders with prayer and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

If the Board of Elders determines that a Pastor has lost the scriptural qualifications for the pastorate, the Board shall begin proceedings to remove that Pastor. Removal of a Pastor shall require a vote of 75% of active members present and voting, at a meeting attended by at least forty percent (40%) of the active membership plus one.



### **3. Congregational Meetings**

Because we are members together of the Body of Christ, it is the responsibility of the Elders to seek advice from the membership. It is the responsibility of the membership to offer advice to the Elders.

The Annual Congregational Meeting or any congregational meeting shall be called and chaired by the Senior Pastor, or his or her designate, unless the meeting has been called to consider discipline or removal of the Pastor. In that case, the meeting shall be called by the Board of Elders, and a chairperson shall be selected by the Elders prior to the meeting.

On issues requiring a vote, each active member shall be entitled to one vote. No votes by proxy will be allowed, however, a person may attend the meeting in-person or remotely via approved technology.

The congregation shall meet at least once annually, within sixty (60) days of the year's end, to review the affairs and progress of the ministry of the church.

Notice of all congregational meetings and the main topics of discussion must be given at two consecutive Sunday worship services preceding the meeting. Every reasonable attempt must be made to see that each Member has received notice of any congregational meeting.

The Board of Elders shall prepare an annual budget to be presented to the congregation for discussion at the Annual Congregational Meeting. A quorum of any congregational meeting is twenty-five (25%) of the active membership.

The Senior Pastor, the Board of Elders, or any twelve (12) members of the congregation can request, in writing to the Board of Elders, that a congregational meeting be held. The date of the meeting shall be no sooner than fifteen (15) days from the date of the request. On receipt of such a request, the Board of Elders must convene the meeting no more than one week later than the proposed meeting date.

Prior to a congregational meeting notice shall be given at public worship stating the relationship between membership requirements and voting privileges. An opportunity shall be afforded individuals to make a public profession of faith in Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord.

### **4. Officers**

The Senior Pastor may be the Chairperson of the Board of Elders, unless the meeting has been called to consider discipline or removal of the Pastor. In that case, an acting chairperson shall be elected from the Elders.

The Board of Elders shall appoint a church Treasurer. The Treasurer shall serve the Board of Deacons without time limit. The Elders will review the appointment regularly.

The Treasurer shall be responsible for seeing that the handling, accounting, and disbursement of finances are properly carried out. The Treasurer shall make a written report to the Board of Elders on a monthly basis, or as requested.

The Board of Elders shall appoint a Secretary for the Board, from its members.

The Secretary will keep minutes of the proceedings of the Board of Elders. At congregational meetings minutes shall be taken by the Secretary or by another person designated by the Board of Elders.

## **5. Hiring/Calling Staff**

Whenever a new Pastor is required, the Board of Elders, through prayer and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, shall appoint a Search Committee. This committee shall be composed of at least two Elders and at least two other Active Members.

The Search Committee shall draw up a short list of pastoral candidates to be interviewed. These candidates shall be asked to participate in the life of the congregation by preaching, sharing with church members, and addressing a congregational meeting.

Following each visit, written submissions from members of the congregation shall be solicited by the Board of Elders to aid them in their preparation of a call to one candidate. The call requires approval of 75% of the Active Members present and voting, at a meeting attended by at least forty percent (40%) of the active membership plus one.

Non-pastoral staff shall be appointed or hired by the Board of Elders as required.

## **6. Financial Affairs**

The financial affairs of the church shall be carried on without purpose of financial gain for the members, and any profits accruing to the church shall be used entirely in promoting the religious and charitable purposes of the church.

The Treasurer shall be responsible for the selection of tellers. The Board of Elders shall appoint an auditor who shall be responsible for the statement of accounts.

The financial year of the church shall end on December 31 in each year. The financial accounts of the church shall be made available, upon reasonable notice, to any interested party for examination in the church offices.

## **7. Dissolution**

If the church is dissolved, any assets remaining after payment and satisfaction of debts and liabilities shall be transferred to other organizations having similar religious and charitable objectives. In no case shall members of the church be recipients of any distribution of assets. A congregational meeting shall be called to direct the Board of Elders how to distribute the assets.

## **8. Amendments**

These by-laws may be amended upon the approval of an amendment by the Board of Elders, with confirmation by 75% of the Active Members present and voting, at a meeting attended by at least forty percent (40%) of the active membership plus one. Proposed amendments shall be provided in writing to each Member thirty (30) days prior to the congregational meeting at which confirmation of an amendment will be requested. Thus the members will have the opportunity to express to the Elders their concerns regarding the proposed amendment.

## **Addendum**

### **\*\**Small Groups***

Small Groups are groups of up to twelve people who meet for Bible study, prayer, fellowship and outreach. While the focus of each small group may differ, it is important for the participants to honestly and openly share one another's joys and sorrows, so that God's Holy Spirit can minister through them.

### ***Mutual Support Groups***

Mutual support groups are groups of 3 or 4 Christians who encourage, support and protect each other. Support group members can steady each other in their desire to centre their lives in Jesus.

We believe that the small group and/or mutual support group experience enhances Christian growth and provides fellowship and mutual support within the overall body of the church. Without the strength that flows through these groups, we cannot fully accomplish our other ministry goals.